

Hiva Rapanui: Ancient Song and Dance of Easter Island

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Rapanui, or Easter Island, the eastern apogee of prehistory's great Austronesian expansion, has surrendered only fragmentary and contradictory information about its ancient performing arts. Almost unique for all of Oceania is Rapanui's seeming lack of any musical instruments in ancient times (Philippi 1873:390; Brown 1924:203; Métraux 1940:354-5). Sugarcane, bone, and wood were available on Easter Island, yet the prehistoric Rapanui people apparently knew no flute, nose-flute, or even simple whistle. Gourds and shark-skins were to be had in plentiful supply; still, there was no Polynesian drum. Small sticks of bone and wood were easily obtainable everywhere on the island; however, the ancient Rapanui appear never to have possessed such mouth resonators like the Māori *pākuru* or Hawaiian *ūkēkē*.

In 1825 Beechey (1831:1:48) did witness on Rapanui a conch-shell trumpet; some later scholars assumed this to have been the ancient Polynesian *pū*. However, Beechey's conch-shell trumpet could only have been a recent import, evidently left there by one of the many whaling ships that visited Rapanui at the time; this is because the subtropical island's coastal waters have always been too cold to sustain such large gastropod mollusks that might furnish a *pū*. The "Pū o Hiro," a large volcanic stone on the island's eastern coast near *ahu* Mahatua, though often claimed to be a musical instrument, can only produce a sound through its internal cavities when the northwest wind is blowing.

The Rapanui *kauaha* 'horse's jawbone' is sometimes mentioned in the secondary literature as an "ancient" percussion instrument of Easter Island that, when dried by the elements, was struck against the earth or palm to generate two distinct sounds. Yet, like the conch, the *kauaha* surely had to be a recent import or invention: horses were not introduced to Rapanui until the last quarter of the 19th century.

The only indigenous Rapanui musical instrument in ancient times appears to have been the *pahu* 'stone drum' that was also known as the *keho* 'thin flat stone.' This was the island's traditional percussion plate (Brown 1924:203; Métraux 1940:355). A three-foot deep and one- or two-foot wide hole was dug in the earth into which was placed a large gourd half filled with tapa or grass (another source alleges the gourd was empty). Over this was laid the *keho* which the musician then stamped with his bare feet to mark the rhythm for the singing dancers. With other vocal performances one sometimes struck two stones together to mark the cadence.

By the end of the 19th century the guitar and ukelele had become popular instruments on Rapanui. Later, in the early 20th century, the accordion was apparently greeted with equal enthusiasm. By the end of the 20th century every form of Western musicmaking has become available on Easter Island (Campbell 1971, 1987, 1993). The most recent musical elaboration/importation is "Polynesian rock": a harmonious marriage of Western rock music and "traditional"—that is, predominantly Tahitian—music performed on Western instruments and sung in the Modern Rapanui-Tahitian language.

Ancient Rapanui music was vocal, which the "traditional" music on the island has remained up to the present day. It appears that, in premissionary Rapanui society, the musical accompaniment consisted almost exclusively of a sung rhythmic bass. However, even today—particularly with themes treating of the *akuaku* 'spirits of the departed' or with *riu* 'ritual songs'—one still frequently marks the cadence by striking together small round *ma'ea* 'stones', sometimes with dramatic acceleration toward the end of the performance. Material accessories to public performances in premissionary times included, among other things, the wooden *ua* 'ceremonial staff' and *rapa* 'ceremonial dance paddle.'

In 1774 George Forster related how on Rapanui the youth "Maroowahai" (Mā Rua Hai?) excitedly boarded James Cook's *Resolution* to chat with the Tahitian interpreter about nothing else but "*heeva*"—that is, *hiva* 'dancing and singing (simultaneously).' Old Rapanui *hiva* derived from Proto-Polynesian **siwa* which meant 'to dance and sing (i.e., at the same time)' (POLLEX 1995). Throughout ancient Polynesia dancing and singing belonged together as an integral expression of the public franchise; both were never regarded so wholly independently of one another as one has ever been wont to do with Western dance and song. Reading in the oldest accounts of Rapanui song, one invariably also read of dancing; hearing of dancing, one also always heard of song. It was this age-old marriage of dance and song that the ancient Rapanui people meant with the single word *hiva*.

Certainly there were other words as well that described the action of dancing as distinct from that of singing: '*ate* and *haka*, for example, were both recorded on Rapanui in the 1860s as meaning 'to dance' (Roussel 1908). However, '*ate* was also a major song (i.e., poetic) genre. And the *hakame'e* was apparently the ancient Rapanui war song.

What is known today about ancient Rapanui *hiva* principally derives from the sparse and superficial accounts of the many early visitors to the island who possessed frustratingly dissimilar powers of observation and understanding. On the visit to Easter Island of the ship *Surry* on 24 March 1821, for example, Ship's Surgeon Edward Dobson (Mitchell Library, New South Wales, MS A 131) described how the Rapanui boarded and "ran about like madmen dancing, Singing & making all manner of Anticks, their attention hardly being engrossed for one moment upon the same thing. . . . They several times amused us with a Dance and Song, each of them taking his part as regular as possible which was far from being a disagreeable or disgusting Performance." In 1825 Captain Frederick Beechey (1831:1:45-6) of HMS *Blossom* hosted a young, pretty, and disarmingly unadorned "Nereid" in his ship's boat who ". . . commenced a song not altogether unharmonious." Whereupon:

As our party passed, the assemblage of females on the rock commenced a song, similar to that chanted by the lady in the boat, and accompanied it by extending their arms over their heads, beating their breasts, and performing a



Figure 1. "Hopping dance ('Hagana') of the natives of Easter Island." Sketch by Masselot, in: Aubert Du Petit-Thouars, *Atlas pittoresque du voyage autour du monde sur la frégate la Vénus; 1830 à 1839*. Paris: Gide et Cie, 1846.

variety of gestures which showed that our visit was acceptable, at least to that part of the community.

Two years later, in 1827, Hugh Cuming (Fischer 1991:304) recounted how, when the Rapanui were about to deliver up some wooden "idols" to their anchored British guests:

... the[y] set up a great Shout, lifting up the figure above their Heads several times, all joining in Chorus, and when upon delivery they would prop it against their brest [*sic*] several times. Although their Chorus was very boisterous it was not unmusical.

In 1830 young John Orlebar (1976:11) of HMS *Seringapatam* recounted the Rapanui's "joy at receiving presents, expressed by a rude awkward dance . . ."

An early description of a Rapanui dance was offered by the Frenchman Du Petit-Thouars (1841:2:230) in 1838, who observed how the Rapanui:

... were dancing and performing a thousand antics which amused us greatly; they were very gay and of a very extraordinary mobility of action and thought . . . Having engaged our company in dancing, [a girl] did not wait to be asked and she executed before us a greatly entertaining hopping minuet. This dance, as that of all the savage peoples, represented the most important drama of life.

The dance that Du Petit-Thouars later depicted in his published book about the voyage (see fig. 1) was, according to him, a "Hagana", a word otherwise unattested in the Old Rapanui language.

The first documented non-Rapanui resident of Easter Island, the Frenchman Joseph-Eugène Eyraud, witnessed a musical performance in 1864 in conjunction with the "*hare hauti* festival" (Eyraud 1866:66):

The houses finished, everyone gathered in groups, they positioned themselves in two lines, and they sang. What do they sing? Oh! I assure you that this poesy is very primitive and above all very little varied. The event that has struck the imagination the greatest is in general the object of the song . . . Do not believe that they make up poems in these circumstances: they are content in simply repeating the affair, sometimes the word alone that expresses it, and they sing it in all the keys, from the beginning of the feast until the end.

Eyraud further observed with the *pa'ina* feast how "the people

meet in groups, placing themselves in two files, and begin singing. The poetry is very primitive . . ." Like Cuming in 1827, Eyraud also witnessed how the Rapanui took their wooden statuettes and held them up in the air "making several gestures and accompanying all of it with a sort of dance and with a meaningless song."

The Catholic priest Father Hippolyte Roussel, who arrived at Rapanui in 1866 with returning lay brother Eyraud, wrote that, "[The Rapanui] have several songs accompanied with cadenced gestures, exceedingly monotonous and exceedingly licentious" (Roussel 1926:464).

When the British man-of-war HMS *Topaze* called in 1868, Ship's Surgeon John Palmer (1870:173) was told by the French missionaries that:

In the winter (June, July), the large houses were built, and the people met for dancing, and held choral meetings, chanting songs, in which the same couplet was often repeated. These meetings were called *Arcauti* [*hare hauti*].

During the same visit, Paymaster Richard Sainthill (1870:450) noted:

... peculiar implements shaped like canoe paddles, but used only in their dances, and called 'rapa'. Occasionally [the Rapanui] would burst into a loud chant, in time to which they kept up a jumping dance, their arms working about, and the 'nua', a garment tied loosely across their shoulders, flying out from their naked bodies in the wind. The scene was sufficiently wild, and the eyes of some of them watched us with a droll expression, as if they thought they would rather surprise us.

Also of the landing party, Lieutenant Colin Dundas (1871:319) remarked on "the rapa or flat paddle . . . with a blade at each end, flourished in their hands while dancing," and (p. 322) "a thing like a double paddle which they shake in the dance is also so called."

From the celebrated French writer Pierre Loti who, as the yet unknown Midshipman Julien Viaud, visited Rapanui in 1872, we have an extravagant fabrication of a purported



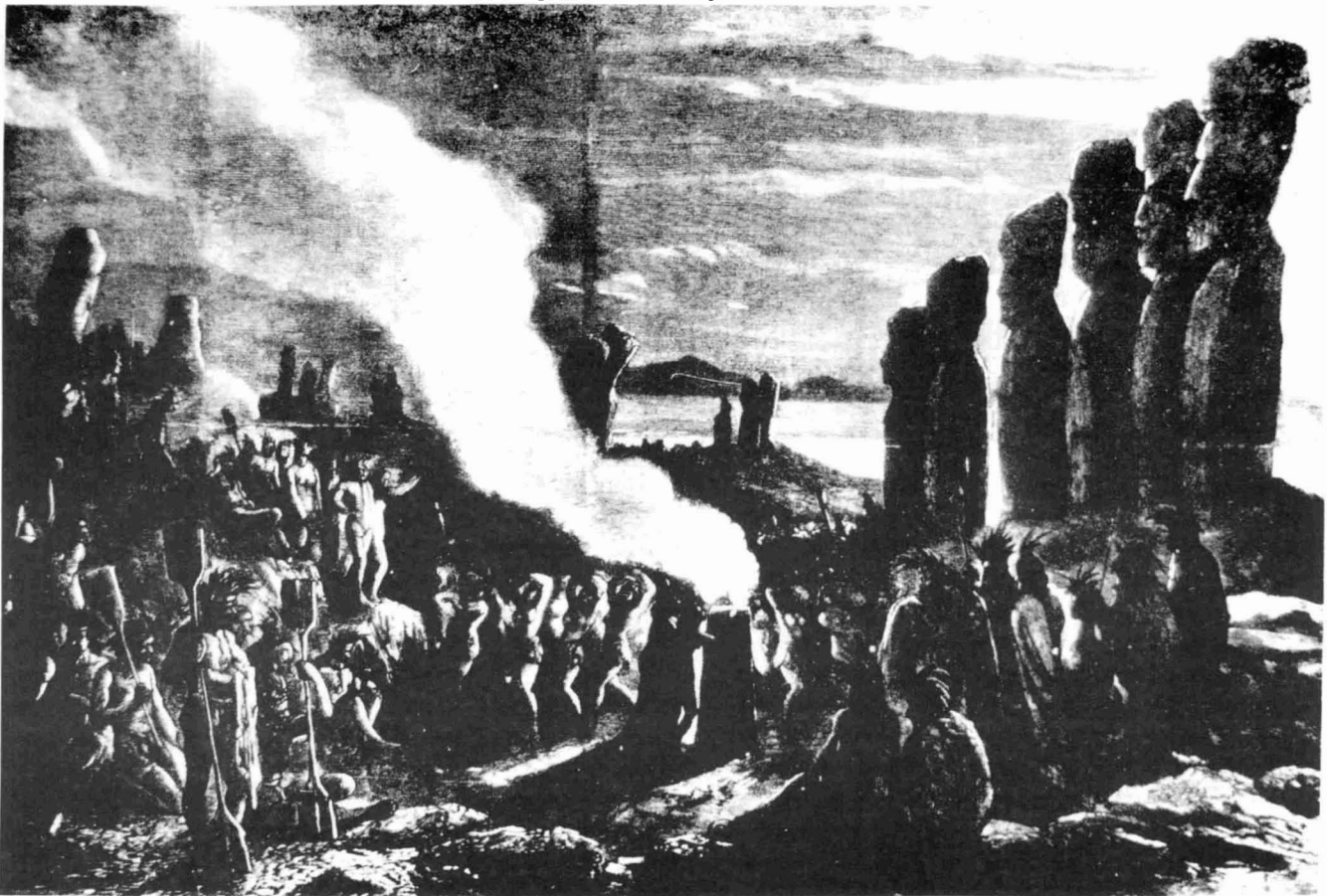


Figure 2. Pierre Loti's fanciful depiction of a Rapanui feast in 1872, first published in *Harper's Weekly* on April 26, 1873.

image-toppling (Viaud 1872/1899) (fig. 2):

At the *marai*, for example, there is no more discipline possible; it becomes a mad confusion of naval pea-jackets and tattooed flesh, a frenzy of movement and noise; the whole crowd mingles, presses, sings, howls, and dances . .

More credible is perhaps Loti's description of Rapanui singing:

. . . they all sing beating their hands as if they were making a dance rhythm. The women utter notes as soft and fluty as those of birds. The men sometimes make small falsetto voices, thin, quavering, and shrill. Sometimes they produce cavernous sounds like the roars of enraged wild animals. Their music is made of short and jerky phrases, ending in gloomy vocalizations descending in minor tones. They seem to express the surprise of being alive and also the sadness of life.

In 1882 the German Captain Wilhelm Geiseler (1883:40-1) wrote of Rapanui song being very cultivated:

It is . . . in three voices with a deep rumbling bass. They possess a large number of lovely songs, which sound very pleasant in the vowel-rich language even when performed in the Polynesian monotonic fashion. Besides the game, dance, and love songs there are also laments for the dead, for the dying, or wounded warriors. These chants distinguish themselves by their deep bass. During the same, one sits still with folded legs, one man is the choir leader and sets the key, as they usually set a sort of scale at the beginning of each song in order to affirm the clarity and harmony of the voices. With the game songs are added movements of the arms and legs, which are often very

lively.

Geiseler further noted that Rapanui dance was different from that normally encountered on Polynesian islands, and described a dance that was apparently the "Hagana" that Du Petit-Thouars had observed on the island in 1838 (fig. 1):

Whereas in Samoa one usually rocks in the hips while sitting, making movements with the arms, here one stands on one leg and extends the other away from oneself with jerky kicks according to the uniform rhythm of the song.

These movements convinced Geiseler that the "so-called dances for amusement are mostly very lewd." As a rule, a carved figure representing a woman was also moved "on one leg" by the choir leader to mark the rhythm of the dance. Geiseler published three of the songs he heard: a *kaikai* 'cat's cradle song' (traditional), a war song (traditional), and a love song with end rhyme (a recent creation). These were the first Rapanui songs to be published (Geiseler 1883:46-7).

On the eve of his departure from Rapanui in 1886, U.S. Naval Paymaster William Judah Thomson (1891:468-9) witnessed, at Vaihū on the island's south coast, Rapanui's "star performers." Three Rapanui sat on the floor accompanying "their discordant voices by thumps upon a tom-tom improvised from old cracker-boxes . . ." The dances were performed by an old woman and a young girl who were wearing single loose garments and were barefooted, their ankles showing under the long garments. Over their head and shoulders they wore a white cotton cloak "which was sometimes spread open and occasionally made to hide the whole figure as they went through the various evolutions of the dance." Thomson

detected no real skill or grace appeared to be identified only with one particular dance. It was soon discarded and replaced with "the small dancing-paddle or wand"—that is, the abbreviated version of a *rapa* resembling a modern pingpong paddle. These were usually held in each hand, though occasionally one and sometimes both were discarded. To portray characters, feather hats and similar ornaments were donned.

"Some of the dances are said to be of obscene tendencies," Thomson wrote. However, on this evening he saw only dance-songs related to the achievements and exploits of ancestors in war, fishing, and love. The gestures, he noted, were "perfectly proper and modest." Indeed, their movements and attitudes were "calculated to display the elegance and grace of the performers." Thomson remarked on the conspicuous absence of any violent motion:

There is no jumping or elaborate pirouettes, no extravagant contortions, and nothing that might be called a precision of step.

The lower limbs seemed to play a part of secondary importance to the arms:

The feet and hands are kept moving in unison with the slow, monotonous music, while the dancers endeavor to act out the words of the song by pantomime Soft swaying movements, a gentle turning away, timid glances, and startled gestures, gradually giving place to more rapturous passion, speak plainly enough the theme of the song.

Some dances were performed by men, Thomson added, and others by women: ". . . but the sexes rarely if ever dance together."

In the first decade of the 20th century the Scots manager of the island's sheep station introduced to the Rapanui people Scottish-style dancing, which apparently was popular up into the 1920s and was often performed before visitors as an example of "ancient Rapanui dancing." (This has been documented on rare film footage.)

Nevertheless, during his 1912 sojourn on Rapanui the German Walter Knoche was fortunate still to be able to observe several ancient Easter Island dances. The *katenga* was perhaps the "Hagana" that had been witnessed by both Du Petit-Thouars in 1838 and Geiseler in 1882, in that it was (Knoche 1925:202):

. . . a very obscene dance in which a file of men stand opposite a file of women. The dance consists of jumps on one foot with flexed knee. The bodies are turned alternately to one side and then to the other.

In a different dance that Knoche observed:

The lower end [of the *ua* 'ceremonial staff'] is jammed between the big toe and the second toe of the left foot, while the upper end is held by the left hand beneath the [*ua*'s] head and away from the body. The *ua* is rhythmically moved back and forth. The younger men and boys who possess *uas* in the form of a child's toy hop about in the periphery on their right foot while they let their left foot swing back and forth at the knee.

This ancient Rapanui dance is reminiscent of the *pāhaka* of Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas (probably the original group homeland of the Rapanui people), which was performed by a group of men dancing on one foot around a number of women. But Knoche (ibid.) also observed:

Similar to the Catega [*sic*], but much more

decent, is a dance in which the standing women form an inner semicircle, whereby they perform light movements with their hips while the men standing in front of them, without moving from the spot, kick alternate feet toward the ground.

The Swiss ethnologist Alfred Métraux (1940:360) later remarked that this latter dance could have been the modern Tahitian *hura*. However, it seems that Knoche did witness an ancient indigenous dance in 1912, since he himself added to the above report: "Very often of late the 'Hula Hula' is danced, that was introduced from Tahiti and was likewise strongly sexually inspired."

The New Zealander Macmillan Brown (1924:201-2) found in 1923 that the Rapanui dances were "even more static than most of the Polynesian dances." The most mobile form of dancing appeared to occur in file, whereby a woman was followed by a man in a long row, in the dance known as the *kaunga* for the paved strip in front of the *ahu*.

They bob the body down with a bend of the knees as in the old-fashioned curtsy and, as they straighten up, hitch a few inches forward, the fingers all the time rapidly quivering; all to the singing of the older men and women who squat on either side.

Macmillan Brown also witnessed the *hokohoko*, the customary festive dance which consisted of a file of youths holding in both hands a *moko* 'lizard carving' or wooden head with outstretched arms, faced by a file of girls who swayed from side to side singing. At the *koro* feast he noted that the "spinning dance" was popular, in which two rows of youths and girls spun *mako* 'i'tops' as they sang a special song. Brown remarked that, as a rule, the singing was "monotonous, generally consisting in the repetition of a word or phrase."

In 1934 Alfred Métraux (1940:359) believed he was witnessing "a modified form" of the (*katenga*?) dance that Du Petit-Thouars had seen in 1838 (fig. 1), which was now known as the *hupahupa* (also *upaupa*) and was very popular: "holding hands, couples would hop first on one foot then on the other". Métraux's informant Juan Tepano, who had also served as informant for Knoche and Brown, repeated his description of the *kaunga* dance to Métraux, who deduced that "it might well be the dominant feature of a special dance performed upon any occasion," since Tepano gave the same description to *all* festive dances.

Tepano also demonstrated to Métraux (1940:361) how the men danced at a feast. He held a *rapa* and, with bent knees, turned and waved it "with extraordinary dexterity and swiftness." Hereby Tepano explained that, of old, a *rapa* was held in each hand as the dancer advanced, jumping from one foot to the other. Other dancers, he said, held the *ao* (the scepter of office, not the *ua*) and "swung vigorously with the entire body." Some men carried a wooden carving in each hand, which they "juggled as they sang and marched" toward the *ahu*. They were laden with pendants and other accoutrements, too, which they suddenly extended or held near the mouth or passed between the legs or pretended to spit on. On this occasion Métraux also observed the adaptation of the Tahitian *hura* that was performed for foreigners in the 1930s: "awkward and without artistic justification."

In what pertains to Rapanui song, Métraux (1940:358) noted in 1934 that Sophia Hei and another woman of the island were conducting a singing school to which the young

Rapanui girls came twice weekly in order to practice for the Sunday mass. At the Catholic mass itself, similar to what Geiseler had observed in 1882, "The voice of the leader, who always starts the song, is heard quite distinctly above those of the other singers." (This is still practiced today, at the end of the 20th century, with the voice of the elderly male choir leader Kiko Paté, perhaps shrill and effeminate in its timbre to Western ears, first setting the key and initial phrase then piping above all other voices in the Hangaroa church.)

In another matter, Métraux (ibid.) had also observed in 1934 that, "The few old songs which are still remembered are sung while sitting on the heels, and the measure is marked by the balancing of the body from one side to the other." This is the traditional *tuku riu* squatting position for chanting that seemingly has been memorialized in stone in the celebrated Rapanui statue "Tuku Turi" unearthed on the southern slope of Rano Raraku by Arne Skjølsvold in 1955-56 (see *Easter Island Studies*, Fig. 67).

Only after Métraux had left Rapanui in 1935 was the *sau-sau* dance introduced to the island by visitors from Samoa. Today the term *sau-sau*, which is not Rapanui (the Rapanui language contains no *s*'s), is applied to every dance festival on the island. Strickly speaking it, too, is a *hiva*—in that it also combines dancing and singing. The *sau-sau* is both harmonic and elegant (fig. 3).

The cumulative weight of evidence appears to argue that Old Rapanui song, irrespective of the appearance of modern derivatives, was always sung in scanned meter—that is to say, it followed the ancient Polynesian "Rule of Six" or "Rule of Eight" and so forth. Hereby each "sense unit" of chanting/singing comprised no more than six or eight morae, with short vowels counting one mora and long vowels two morae. An example of the "Rule of Six," with characteristic lengthening of the fifth mora, would be the first line of the famous Rapanui song that probably dates from the 1880s (accented for better comprehension): "*Ká ungá te rōngó, kí 'a Hína Māngó.*" In Western transcription this would yield with the "Rule of Six," for example, six vowels to each half-line of written text; each full line of written text would then comprise two short "sense units" or twelve morae that often express two grammatical phrases.

Pierre Loti's description of hearing on Rapanui in 1872 mens' "small falsetto voices, thin, quavering, and shrill" is reminiscent of the exaggerated quaver that one hears in the song of many Polynesian islands. This type of singing is still practised on Easter Island today.

In the written sources the Old Rapanui song genres are a confusion of contradictions. A short description of most of the major, authentic, song genres follows, as well as these can be reconstructed and understood at the end of the 20th century.

riu and *akoako*

Old Rapanui for 'song' in general was *riu* (also *tai*). Today on the island, any ritual song is known as a *riu*. To sing a *riu* was to *ako* (or *āko*) the *riu*. If the *riu* was a monotonic recitation, then this was an *akoako*, as with Rapanui's oldest known chant "E Timo te Akoako" that was composed around 1800 and learnt by the pubescent boys attending a *rongorongo* "school" as their first formal chant (Fischer 1994). (*Rongorongo* designates Rapanui's unique premissionary script; see below.) To chant an *akoako* was to *timo* the *akoako*. Several of the following *riu* were in fact often monotonic *akoako*.

'ate

This is the panegyric, eulogy, or praise of a person's deeds. There was the *'ate 'atua*, the praise of gods or the song of love or friendship. In 1934 Métraux (1940:355) was told by Juan Tepano that these were "solemn, had something to do with the gods, and were chanted during great feasts." Englert (1938:19) described the *'ate 'atua* as "the song in which pleasant and happy events of the past are recounted." There was also the *'ate manava mate* (lit. 'dead belly song/liver'), which was the common song of unrequited love. Englert (1938:19) was also informed that *'ate* meant 'song' in general.

The *'ate* is clearly the most important and most common of ancient Rapanui's verse genres.

'ēi

The *'ēi* was the satirical or jeering song, one of premissionary Rapanui's most popular and dynamic literary genres. This could also be a *koro 'ēi* when such a song was performed by a chorus. It seems likely that the famous Old Rapanui chant "E Timo te Akoako" was such a *koro 'ēi*. In 1923 Brown (1924:203) was informed that the *"ate hei"* (i.e., *'ate 'ēi*) was "sung by men and women in the *hokohoko* dance." This would perhaps allude to the predominately sexual character of the premissionary *'ēi*, since the *hoko* comprised the erotic genre. In

1934 Métraux (1940:356) was told that the *'ēi* were always considered "bad"—that is, sexually explicit. He wrote that Juan Tepano indicated:

... these songs were injurious and were directed against an unfaithful woman or against a girl who paid no attention to the love of some man. He said that they were sung by a group of men and women. The women squatted on their knees in front of the men who tramped the resonance box dug in the ground.

In 1936 Juan Tepano also said to Englert (1939:221) of the *'ēi*: *Te me'e he 'ēi: he tai rakerake mo hakame'eme'e, mo hakariri, mo haka'e'ete 'o te manava* ("The thing called '*ēi*: it's a bad song for ridiculing a person, for making him mad, for getting him angry"). Englert (1948:305) added that if



Figure 3. The modern Rapanui *sau-sau* dance, a recent importation. (Photograph by Lino and Daniele Pellegrini)

persons became inimical to one another it was usual only that they took their revenge by celebrating a *koro* that made use of "the famous song 'ei'."

hakame'e or hakakākai

This was the war song, that was also known throughout most of Polynesia—in various linguistic manifestations—as the *haka* dance. Sometimes Rapanui informants called it the "Riuhaka-kaa-kai" (i.e., *riu hakakākai*) (Estella 1921:89). Other times they said it was the '*ate hakakakai*' (Métreaux 1940:355). In the 1860s this appears to have been known as the *hakame'e* (Roussel 1908:185). The lexical constant here is *haka*, the ancient inherited form. Brown (1924:202-3) was informed that the '*ate hakakākai*' was a "war song meant to work evil on the enemy." Felbermayer (1972:269) listed the war song as the *tama'i*, a recent Tahitian loan.

hakakio

The *hakakio* (lit. 'to repay the attention one has received in time of want') appears to incorporate the song of thanksgiving—that is, a public display for favors received. Nothing more is known of this particular genre.

hakaopo

Juan Tepano informed Englert (1939:218) that at a *pa'ina* festival one sang the *koro hakaopo*, or *hakaopo* chorus. Brown (1924:203) was told that the '*ate koro hakaopo*' was "sung by a row of young men and a row of young women when they were making the white straw hats (*hauteatea*) or dyeing the *nua* (mantle) half white, half red." Métreaux (1940:355) was informed that the *koro hakaopo* was a "chant with a 'good' meaning . . . characterized by the low, quiet tone in which it was sung." Since Old Rapanui *hakaopo* held the significance 'to chase away, to cause to flee,' one can only speculate that this song genre was perhaps originally a public charm to ward off impending evil.

hoko

Evidently this was the ancient erotic song, also called the *hoko riu* ('sung *hoko*'). Old Rapanui *hoko* held the meaning 'to sport, to play.' Unhappily, today nothing is known of its nature. It is possible that the *hoko* might simply be another name for the '*ēi*' genre above, which was known to be exceedingly ribald.

ako hakaha'uru poki

Felbermayer (1972:268) cited this as the name of the traditional Rapanui lullaby. It literally means 'song for making children sleep.' Apparently no older, more traditional, Rapanui name for this popular ancient Polynesian genre has survived. Brown (1924:203) was told of the '*ate he reu*,' "a lullaby for the crying (*reu*) child." However, **reu* does not occur in the Rapanui language. Brown's variant is probably a recent derivation from Tahitian *reureu* ('comfortable').

kaikai

The *kaikai*, rhythmic songs that are sung to "cat's cradles" or string games, are the Rapanui manifestation of a highly specific poetic genre found in various forms not only throughout the Pacific but throughout the world (Blixen 1979:50; Sherman 1993). On premissionary Rapanui the

together with their corresponding cat's cradles, were not simple children's games: they were used, among other things, to teach or to produce a magic effect. The Old Rapanui word *kaikai* is full reduplication of *kai* meaning 'to recite.' In this context *kaikai* would originally have meant 'stories, tales, recitations.' Since the late 19th century, however, the Rapanui appear to have used the word only in conjunction with cat's cradles. *He ako i te kaikai* was evidently the proper expression that signified 'to sing the texts of the cat's cradles' (Englert 1938:16). The word *kai* itself embraces a veritable host of meanings throughout Polynesia relating to tales, manners of speech, narratives, fables, and much more.

The Rapanui string games and *kaikai*—though certainly not the figures and texts that one knows on the island today—arrived on the original canoe as part and parcel of the Marquesan settlers' most important baggage. The subject matter of those *kaikai* that have survived at least the last century—"chants for love, for the dead, for saving people from dying, for addressing noblemen, and for the multiplication of birds and fish" (Métreaux 1940:390)—reveals that the *kaikai* texts comprise in actual fact not a separate verse genre as such, but embrace a wide spectrum of the subjects treated by the many oral traditions of the pre- and post-missionary Rapanui. The first published Rapanui song was a *kaikai* (Geiseler 1883:46). A number of still unpublished *kaikai* are included in Katherine Routledge's field notes (1914-15) and in Alfred Métreaux's field notes (1934-35). The best collection of the oldest and properly edited *kaikai* texts is the superb study by Blixen (1979).

In addition to the above song genres, Rapanui also displays recently borrowed forms. Several of these have merged with, and become almost indistinguishable from, the ancient inherited traditions. The Tahitian *ute* is a sacred song or traditional ballad, usually sung to guitar music; to this Rapanui artists have invariably added their own words and gestures. The *hā ipoipo* comprises the Rapanui wedding song, customarily representing fathers who mourn the loss of a son; the name comes from Tahitian *hā* 'a chant or prayer to save the poisoned' and Tahitian *ipo* 'marriage'. In the 1860s French missionaries introduced to the Rapanui people the European-Tahitian *himene* 'hymn', which has since been adapted and expanded by Rapanui artists to encompass any song relating to the island's history or to the legends of the '*ariki*' 'chiefs' or of other famous persons. The Rapanui *himene* is usually based on Western polyphony.

Rapanui's unique *rongorongo* artefacts, which are incised with Oceania's only known script predating the 20th century, were also sung/chanted aloud in public performances. The erect reader-singer, holding the incised tablet or staff in both hands, would sway back and forth to mark the rhythm of the respective chanted inscription. Evidently a local elaboration from the end of the 18th century after the Rapanui had been compelled to witness the Spaniards' document of annexation in 1770, the *rongorongo* texts might also have contained some of the above mentioned song genres. The 25 surviving *rongorongo* artefacts predominantly comprise, however, highly abbreviated, repetitive, creation chants or cosmogonies (Fischer 1995a,b). One calendrical text has also been identified (Barthel 1958:242-7); however, the phonetic statement of this calendrical text remains unknown.

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